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The What's and Why's of The How To of Qualitative Research

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Abstract

The book provides an excellent guide for those wishing to conduct qualitative research, whether new or experienced scholars. It links theoretical foundations with practical tools, including examples that illustrate how to bridge the gap between theorizing and conducting real-life qualitative research in the field. It shows how to design and craft the qualitative research in the field using different research tools (e.g., interviews, observations etc.) and how to analyze the data and compose a qualitative draft. In short, it answers the “what,” “why,” and “how” of qualitative research.

Keywords

Qualitative Research, Guide, Tools, Resources

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The What's and Why's of *The How To of Qualitative Research*

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The book provides an excellent guide for those wishing to conduct qualitative research, whether new or experienced scholars. It links theoretical foundations with practical tools, including examples that illustrate how to bridge the gap between theorizing and conducting real-life qualitative research in the field. It shows how to design and craft the qualitative research in the field using different research tools (e.g., interviews, observations etc.) and how to analyze the data and compose a qualitative draft. In short, it answers the “what,” “why,” and “how” of qualitative research. Keywords: Qualitative Research, Guide, Tools, Resources

A great deal of literature has been written about the essence, validity, boundaries and genres of qualitative research (e.g., Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2009). Some scholars have addressed specific approaches of qualitative research such as grounded theory (e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Others have discussed competing paradigms in qualitative research, including the narrative approach (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). However, when we want to determine the borders of qualitative research and actually collect data from the field, we need a book that tells us how to formulate the research question, design and conduct the research field, analyze the data, and finally present our findings.

The How To of Qualitative Research (Aurini, Heath, and Howell, 2016) answers these questions, and as such, fills a lacuna. The book explains and illustrates the depths of qualitative research on a practical level, and constitutes a thorough guide to designing all the stages of first-rate qualitative research. The authors chose to organize the book and present rich information in a manner that makes the book a helpful didactic tool for teaching qualitative research to beginners.

The book answers the following questions:

1. How to formulate a research question;
2. How to build questions for an interview;
3. How to build a single or multiple case study;
4. How to approach the field and perform the research in practice;
5. Which information sources can be found in the research field; and
6. How to analyze and present the findings.

The authors use their own long-standing experience both in teaching and performing qualitative research, and the experience of other outstanding researchers to enrich and support the advice that they offer in this book, as described in their own words:

We bring together exemplary technical guides and research studies in our book to offer detailed explanations of qualitative methodology and design. Drawing on trusted sources from masters of qualitative research (e.g., their own course outlines), along with a thorough literature review and our own experience as qualitative researchers, allowed us to distil the most salient strategies for designing, collecting and analyzing qualitative data. (p. 5)

Their easy to follow step-by-step instructions demonstrate how to use supplementary tools, focusing primarily on detailing how you actually create and execute these techniques. For example they describe how to compose an interview briefing and how to use it. Moreover, it contains a number of useful pedagogical aids, including boxes, summaries, diagrams, checklists and templates for organizing and collecting data (e.g., demographic surveys). These tools can be used as is, or easily modified to suit the researcher's specific needs.

The book (Aurini, Heath, & Howells, 2016) helps to prepare qualitative scholars to make informed choices helping them to compose optimal research questions and make convincing statements about their data; when a clear methodological pathway has been forged, the researcher is in a better position to develop their qualitative project's trustworthiness and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The book's structure (Aurini, Heath, & Howells, 2016) is divided into three parts. The first part (chapters 1-3) explains the art and practice of conceptualization and formulation of a research project. The chapters take the user through the sequential process from a general research interest to the statement of a concrete research problem.

The second part (chapters 4-7) demonstrates how to perform qualitative research in practice beginning with entry into the research field, and how to use interviews in qualitative research. Chapter 4 presents ways to use the different types of interviews. Chapter 5 describes how to use focus groups including how to structure this tool and the practical decisions involved in its use. Chapters 6-7 provide methods for the mining, location and management of information in the field.

The third and final part of the book (chapters 8-9) presents tools to analyze qualitative findings. Chapter 8 describes how to use coding in data analysis. The chapter provides practical tools for preparing data for analysis, including the coding process. And finally, chapter 9 explains how the researcher can transmit and communicate their qualitative research findings. The chapter systemically outlines the expectations of different audiences (e.g., policy makers, multi-disciplinary versus single-disciplinary scholars), and how researchers should approach writing a paper, a book proposal or grant application using qualitative data.

I find this book (Aurini, Heath, & Howells, 2016) interesting because it links theory and practice in conducting qualitative research in various social and educational research fields. In this respect, the book provides valuable instruction on the management and execution of all the stages of qualitative research. Usefully, the book is also supplemented by online resources such as lectures to aid study and support teaching. As a scholar who has quite extensively used this genre, I find this book to be a good guide to teaching qualitative research, managing it, and implementing it in practice. For these reasons, I have no hesitation in warmly recommending this important book, *The How To of Qualitative Research* (Aurini, Heath, & Howells, 2016) to teachers of qualitative research, undergraduate and graduate thesis supervisors, and others who conduct qualitative study projects.

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